



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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\$3.7 million in federal grants boost Washington's specialty crops

OLYMPIA – Washington is the third-largest recipient of federal funds under a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program that supports a vital segment of the Evergreen State's agriculture. The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) will receive \$3.7 million, including costs for administrative oversight, to fund 27 projects that will benefit Washington's diverse specialty crops. USDA made the announcement before the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture annual meeting earlier this month in Delaware.

Washington's project goals include increasing exports to traditional and emerging foreign markets, providing technical and business-development assistance to boost sales of specialty crops, and supporting sales at farmers markets and other direct-market venues.

"Our trade mission to China and Vietnam reinforces the necessity of maintaining and further developing overseas markets for our agricultural products," said Gov. Chris Gregoire. "These federal funds will help us support our state's diverse exporters, which in turn will create jobs. In this global economy, growers, academic researchers, retailers and consumers benefit through partnerships that promote the long-term success of Washington agriculture."

Under the federal block grant's formula, the level of funding for each state is determined by relative size of a state's specialty crop industry. Washington is the nation's third leading producer of fruit, vegetables and horticulture crops. Congress authorized the program in the 2008 Farm Bill.

"This USDA grant program provides opportunities for our agricultural community to develop innovations that will strengthen Washington's agriculture," said WSDA Director Dan Newhouse. "We are supporting projects that will help producers sell more fruits and vegetables at home and abroad to boost farm incomes."

The federal block grant program was designed to provide grants to states solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture.

In awarding these funds, WSDA selected projects that build on the expertise and success of the industry, will make a meaningful contribution to the viability of fruit, vegetable and horticulture production and have the potential to support the largest number of producers. Projects that included matching funds by the applicant were given priority—all of the 2010 awards include matching funds or in-kind donations provided by the applicant.

Commodity commissions, agricultural associations, Washington State University and WSDA programs that promote and protect trade and food assistance are among those receiving the grants. Project work is to be completed

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from one to three years.

A list of projects is available on the WSDA grant program website at www.agr.wa.gov/grants or click directly to the list at <http://agr.wa.gov/grants/docs/2010SpecialtyCropBlockGrantProgramAwards.pdf>.

WSDA conducted a two-phase competitive solicitation process to award funding. During the first phase, WSDA received 72 concept papers and funding requests in excess of \$11 million. With input from WSDA officials and an industry review panel, WSDA selected the most promising projects for inclusion into the state's single grant application. USDA has approved Washington's application, clearing the way for the projects to move forward.

WSDA anticipates conducting a similar grant selection process for 2011 and 2012, when the current farm bill ends. WSDA's 2011 application materials will be posted on its grant website in late 2010 or early 2011 at www.agr.wa.gov/grants. Additional information about the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program can be found at the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service website at: www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp.

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